

Research into student wellbeing and school attendance

Information for case-study schools

1. Why are you receiving this information?

You have been contacted by the [National Foundation for Educational Research](#) (NFER) to take part in a research study funded by [The Nuffield Foundation](#), to explore the relationship between pupil wellbeing and school absence.

1.1.1 What does being a case-study school involve?

Case studies will take place between November 2025 and February 2026 they will involve:

An initial school staff interview

- **An online interview with a member of school staff with responsibility for attendance**
(Duration: up to one hour)

The interview will explore perceived barriers to school attendance, including the role of pupil wellbeing, the types of support offered by the school and perceived effectiveness, views about government attendance policies/strategies, and further support needed.

We will also spend some time during the interview arranging a visit to the school.

A school visit

A member of the research team will visit the school for up to a day and carry out the following activities:

- **One-to-one interviews with up to two students who have experienced persistent absence** (Duration: around 30 minutes per interview)

Schools will be asked to nominate up to two students who have previously been persistently absent but have now re-engaged with school to take part in an interview about their experiences. To ensure these students can speak freely to researchers, while minimising any safeguarding risks, we plan to interview students individually in semi-supervised environments, such as the corner of an otherwise empty classroom while a member of school staff is available to allow visual supervision but cannot hear what is being said. If they wish, students can request to have an adult they trust with them. This could be their parent/carer or a school staff member.

- **A group discussion with up to six students** (Duration: 45 minutes)

Schools will be asked to nominate up to six students from Years 8 to 10 to join a group discussion in school attendance. These students do not need to have experienced persistent absence themselves but should be able to talk about school attendance, for example through their observations, the experiences of their peers, or their broader understanding.

- **Interviews with two parents/carers of students who have experienced persistent absence** (Duration: around 30 minutes per interview).

Our preference is to interview parents/carers of students selected for one-to-one interviews. However, if the school does not deem this appropriate, or the selected parents/carers themselves, once contacted, do not wish to be interviewed, we would look to invite parents/carers of other students that have previously been, or are currently, persistently absent to take part. We will ask schools to facilitate interviews with parents/carers (e.g. by providing information about the study and or/sharing contact details with their permission). Parent/carer interviews will take place either on the day of the visit, or online/by telephone at an alternative date and time that is more convenient for them.

- **A short parent/carer online survey** – to all parents/carers in case study schools (Duration 5-10 minutes)

Schools will be asked to distribute a weblink to the online survey to all parents/carers through their usual communication channels (e.g. school portals, email, text message, newsletters. Questions will explore views and experiences of their child's attendance.

2. Recognition for contributing to the study

In appreciation of the time involved in hosting case-study visits, your school will receive £200 towards supply cover and in recognition of the time spent supporting the set up. Interview/focus group participants will be offered a £30 voucher upon completion.

Keeping staff, students and parents/carers involved in the study safe

We will ask the school to provide the parents/carers of nominated students with an information sheet about the study and a form to complete to confirm they agree to their child taking part.

The safety and wellbeing of school staff, students and parents/carers involved in this study are very important to the research team. The team are aware of the potential sensitivity of the topic and are experienced at working with children and young people.

NFER has robust safeguarding protocols in place to protect individuals during the visit. All researchers undertaking the interviews and case-study visits have Enhanced DBS certificates.

3. How will NFER use and protect the data collected?

With permission, interviews will be recorded using an encrypted audio-recorder when done in-person or using Microsoft Teams when done remotely. This will enable us to produce accurate interview transcripts.

All personal data gathered during this study will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR 2021, stored securely and treated in the strictest confidence by NFER and The Difference. We will not name individuals or schools in any report arising from this work. Interview data will be analysed and presented at individual and school level.

Further information about how your data will be processed and who to contact if you wish to withdraw from data processing can be found in the Privacy Notice for School Staff.

1.1.2 How will the findings be reported?

The information we collect from this school together with the other case-study schools will be used to write a report which will be published at the end of 2026. This report will be freely available on the NFER's and The Nuffield Foundation's websites.

4. Who can I contact for more information?

If you have any questions about the research more broadly, please contact Dr Emma Moore e.moore@nfer.ac.uk or call 01753 574123 (NFER head office).